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INVASIVE SPECIES

Mighty mite

Tiny Scotch broom parasite could help effort to kill invasive weed

By Heather Hacking
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JACKSON » If you live in the foothills of Northern California, you may hate Scotch broom. The invasive plant is hard to kill, contributes to fire damage and drops seeds that may sprout decades in the future. Organizations have been formed specifically to kill the plant. Workgroups are regularly planned to rip the plants from the ground.

A nearly microscopic mite may be a new weapon in the battle against Scotch broom. The mite causes galls, which are growths on the plant. The galls reduce the plant's ability to grow and reproduce.

A little mite history

In 2006 researchers found the gall mite in Washington and Oregon. It was detected in 2014 in the foothills north and east of Sacramento.

Evidence of the mite has not been reported in this area. However, not that many people have been looking.

Farm Adviser Scott Oneto is based in the Sierra Foothills and works with the University of California Cooperative Extension. He said he would love if people in the foothills around the Sacramento Valley would check nearby Scotch broom for evidence of mites.

The mite itself is tiny – about the width of a human hair – and is best spotted under a microscope.

However, people will notice the effects of the mite's presence.

The plant will develop fuzzy, gray growth – a cluster of galls.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY SCOTT ONETO, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) plant is an attractive plant. Related to the sweet pea, yellow flowers bloom in the spring.

MITES » PAGE 8

ENVIRONMENT

Carmel River in recovery?

New hope, scrutiny for Carmel River in wake of dam removal, rerouted channel

By Jim Johnson
[Monterey County Herald](http://www.montereyherald.com)

CARMEL VALLEY » An adult steelhead was spotted in the Carmel River earlier this month, migrating upstream past the point where two white stripes of concrete on steep canyon faces mark the site of the old San Clemente Dam.

Redds or nests that female steelhead build for their eggs have been seen above the dam removal and river reroute site, evidence the threatened species is moving upriver unimpeded for the first up the 36-mile river during a visit to the site on Feb. 18. It rushed over a series of step

pools and swirled into resting pools along a quarter-mile stretch of the river specifically designed to provide the best possible passage-way for the fish to swim upstream and allow the river's crucial downstream habitat to begin the recovery process. The river's new banks are festooned with fledgling willow trees and other of the some 100,000 plantings at the site. Massive log barriers are set up to protect them from a huge rain-storm-driven rush of river water if the promise of El Niño weather conditions ever comes through. Piles of silt and gravel are strategically placed to slowly

RIVER » PAGE 8



VERN FISHER — MONTEREY HERALD

Cal Am vice president of operations Richard Svindland, NOAA research ecologist Dr. David Boughton, Cal Am external affairs manager Catherine Stedman and Cal Am senior project manager Aman Gonzalez walk along the new Carmel River channel at the former San Clemente Dam site on Feb. 18. The step pool design was constructed with thousands of boulders and is designed to facilitate fish passage up river.

BUTTE COUNTY

Meeting to focus on challenges to pot rules

By Ryan Olson
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OROVILLE » Butte County supervisors have few items on their Tuesday agenda, leaving ample consideration for two challenges to recent marijuana rule changes.

The board will reconsider recent changes to the county's medical marijuana cultivation rules and right-to-farm ordinance. Two petitions filed by the Inland Cannabis Farmers Association prevented January changes from going into effect, although the previous ordinances remain active.

The farmers group filed two petitions with about 13,000 signatures each on Feb. 24. In order for the petitions to be certified, the group needed 6,177 valid signatures for each item.

The Clerk-Recorder's Office conducted a random check of the petitions' signatures and will certify the petitions to the board Tuesday.

Supervisors face two choices – repeal the changes or submit the matter to voters. If the items are put up for a vote, they may be scheduled for either the June 7 primary election or a special election after 88 days.

Board chairman and Oroville-area Supervisor Bill Connelly said last week that he believed the board was inclined to let the voters decide on the items.

Jessica MacKenzie, director of the Inland Cannabis Farmers Association, said the group would be at Tuesday's meeting. She has said voters should be able to decide on significant changes to the ordinances.

The changes

The matters under consideration are the changes to the ordinances. The previous rules remain in effect, including cultivation rules approved by voters in 2014.

The current cultivation rules generally set growing dimensions based on lot size. There are also other conditions, including residency requirements

POT » PAGE 8

K-12

CUSD prepares for teacher shortage

By Dani Anguiano
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CHICO » Chico Unified School District is preparing to recruit and hire more teachers as the state and the district face a teacher shortage.

Districts throughout the state, including Chico Unified, laid off thousands of teachers during the economic downturn. The economy has improved, but enrollment in teacher preparation programs statewide has decreased, assistant superintendent of human resources Jim Hanlon said. Chico Unified is also facing large waves of retirements in coming years, at a time when the district is trying to reduce class sizes, which requires more teachers. The district is now recruiting more teachers, and attending career fairs on university campuses in Chico and Sacramento.

During the economic downturn, districts throughout the state laid off thousands of teachers, and because layoffs are determined based on seniority, Chico Unified primarily laid off younger teachers, Hanlon said. This left the district "top-heavy" with more older teachers.

Chico Unified expects a large number of retirements in the coming years with up to 25 to 30 percent of its current teachers retiring in the

DISTRICT » PAGE 8

OBITUARY

Nanacy Reagan dies at 94 in California

The former first lady died Sunday at her home in the Bel-Air section of Los Angeles.

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SNAPSHOTS

Catch your neighbors' view of local events

Readers can submit photos featuring events and activities in their communities. They appear each Monday. PAGE A5

CRIME

1 Killed, 10 injured in fatal shooting

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department says one man was rushed to a hospital, where he died. PAGE A7

GOOD MORNING!

Have a great day, subscriber Abbie Moriarty.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Check out what's going on in your neighborhood and the community. PAGE A4